

# Pariantes

By José Antonio Esquibel

## Founders of the Villa de Santa Fe

The city of Santa Fe inaugurates its *cuartocentenario* celebrations in July 2008 with events scheduled into 2010. Members of the city's Cuartocentenario Committee are meeting on a regular basis to generate ideas for commemorating and celebrating 400 years of the city's unique history as a diverse community.

Santa Fe has served as the seat of central government in New Mexico since the early 1600s. By the middle of the 17th century, the population of the town hovered around 50 *vecino* (tax-paying citizens) households with about 250 people, and an estimated 1,000 Indian and *mestizo* residents, including Mexican Indians, Pueblo Indians

and Plains Indians raised in Spanish households, as well as a few people of mixed African-European descent. Also, it is important to note that between 1680 and 1694, after the Pueblo Revolt, Santa Fe became a Tano and Tewa pueblo community. There is much to celebrate in the diversity of Santa Fe's cultural heritage.

The majority of people with Hispano roots in old New Mexico can trace their ancestry to at least one family that resided in Santa Fe sometime between 1610 and 1820. As such, the *cuartocentenario* celebration offers the opportunity for a homecoming trip between July 2008 and the end of 2010. *La Herencia* will provide details on specific events for planning a pilgrimage to the historical town of many of our ancestors.

The city of Santa Fe's *cuartocentenario* celebration is also fostering exciting new



215 E. De Vargas Street, circa 1887–1895, known as the Oldest House in Santa Fe. Photo courtesy Denver Public Library, Western History Collection, William Henry Jackson, Z-4109.

scholarship on the history of the city. One of the main topics being studied is the founding date of Santa Fe and the town's early history, which is shrouded in mystery due to a loss of documentation. Still, there is information to be found in surviving records. A careful examination of some of these records reveals several noteworthy circumstances prefiguring the founding of the Villa de Santa Fe. These include:

- establishment of the Plaza in Santa Fe during the era of Juan de Oñate
- decline in prominence of the Villa de San Gabriel between 1604 and 1609 as the principle Spanish settlement
- extreme discouragement experienced by the soldier-settlers following Oñate's unsuccessful expedition to find the coast of the South Sea (1604–1605), which resulted in their requesting permission to abandon New Mexico
- steadfast advocacy by the Franciscan friars for support by the royal crown to retain New Mexico as a province in order to preserve the Christian faith of those Pueblo Indians recently baptized and to introduce Christianity to other native peoples
- the Royal Order of 1608 to preserve New Mexico for the purpose of evangelization
- toleration by Pueblo Indians of the presence of Spaniards in the area

Evidence indicates that the Villa de Santa

Fe was established as a military camp or the site of a garrison during the tenure of Oñate prior to 1608. This is supported by information contained in the certification of services of Capt. Juan Martínez de Montoya (1608), who indicated he was posted at the camp of Santa Fe and then settled at Santa Fe before eventually settling at the Villa de San Gabriel by 1608. Also, Fray Alonso de Benavides made a statement in the 1630s saying that Santa Fe was founded by Oñate, and he seems to indicate that this may have occurred before the majority of soldier-settlers left New Mexico in October 1601. In addition, there are documented statements of two men who indicated they were natives of Santa Fe born

between 1604 and 1607.

During the Oñate era (1598–1608), none of New Mexico's Spanish settlement had the confirmed status of *villa*. Writing in April 1609, Fray Francisco de Velasco recommended to the crown that the official status of *villa* be conferred upon the Villa de San Gabriel, suggesting that this settlement did not have the status of a formal municipality as recognized by Spanish law despite the fact that *villa* was used as part of the settlement's title. This is further supported by the orders given to newly appointed governor Pedro de Peralta by Viceroy Luis de Velasco in March 1609, in which the new governor was instructed to establish a formal *villa* in New Mexico.

Fray Velasco recommended that New Mexico not be abandoned, as was being considered by others. He advised that it was more desirable to have the married Spaniards remain because "they are used to the land and are friends of the natives." It is important to note that despite conflicts among some Spaniards and Pueblo Indians, these people established complex networks of social, familial, economic, political and religious relationships that fostered cooperation and interdependence in the pursuit of economic development, protection, food production and stability.

Of the 50 soldiers accounted for as *vecinos* of

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New Mexico in 1608, an unknown but probably small number of them, some with families, lived at Santa Fe prior to the arrival of Peralta in early 1610. The origin of the municipality of the Villa de Santa Fe is documented in the decree of Luis de Velasco, viceroy of Nueva España, dated March 30, 1609, in which he committed to paper the instructions to Gov. Pedro de Peralta for establishing a formal *villa* in New Mexico. The new governor was apparently persuaded to bestow the official legal status of *villa* on the military camp of Santa Fe.

It is important to note that the "founding" of the Villa de Santa Fe was not a single event occurring on a specific day of a month within a particular year, nor accomplished by a single individual. The propensity to attribute the founding of a community to a single individual and to assign a specific date simplifies a complex process in order to turn it into an easily identifiable historical event.

Basically, the Villa de Santa Fe emerged as a municipality over the course of several years, culminating in its formal recognition as a *villa* sometime after the arrival of Gov. Peralta. Santa Fe remained the center of Spanish civil and royal government through most of the 1600s.

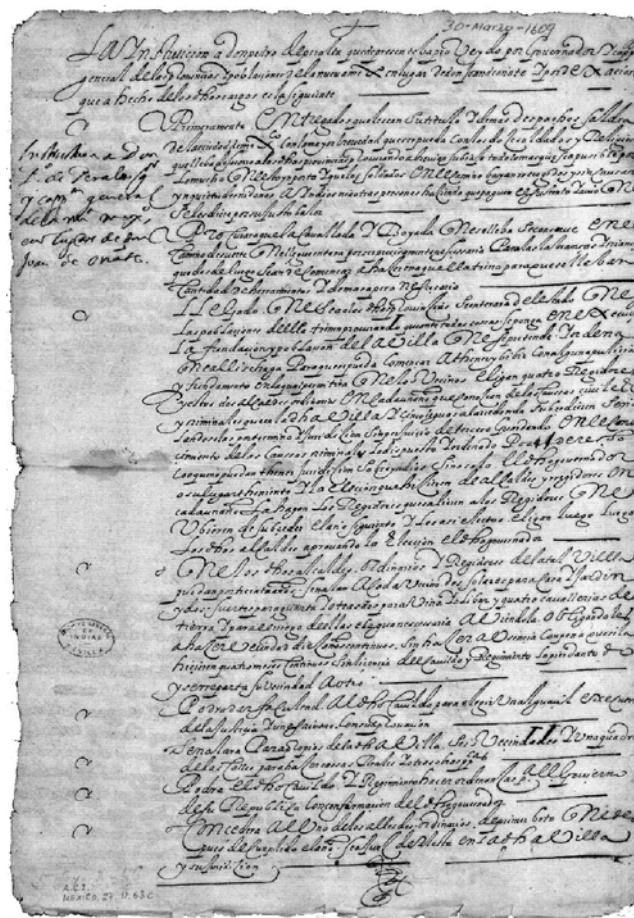
Unfortunately, no record has yet been uncovered listing the names of the original settlers of the Villa de Santa Fe. However, records from the 1620s confirm the names of 13 individuals representing eight households as the founders. Fragments of information extracted from various surviving historical documents provide the names of several individuals referred to variously as *primeros fundadores* (first founders), *vecinos fundadores* (founding tax-paying citizens) and *antiguos pobladores* (old settlers). This last designation appears to distinguish those few settlers that lived in the area prior to the formal designation of the Villa de Santa Fe as a legally recognized municipality.

The following list of known founders of the Villa de Santa Fe is certainly incomplete. Of the eight households, seven represent families whose surnames are still found in New Mexico today and for whom there are numerous living descendants. To date, the known founders of the Villa de Santa Fe include:

1. Maese de Campo de la Provincia (Field Commander of the Province) Pedro Durán de Chávez, age 60 in 1626, *primero fundador*, with his wife, Isabel de Bohórquez, age 40 in 1626.

2. Sargento Mayor (Sergeant Major) Francisco Gómez, age 40 in 1626, *primero fundador* and *vecino*, with his wife, Ana Robledo.

3. Juan Griego, the elder, and his wife, Pascuala Bernal, the parents of Santa Fe native Juan Griego, b.ca. 1604–1605.



First page of instructions to Gov. Peralta to found a villa with boundaries stretching five leagues in all directions. It allots *vecinos* two plots of land, one for a house and one for a garden, plus additional land for orchards and farming. Archivo General de las Indias, Mexico 27, N63c, f.1r

4. Juan López Olguín, age 64 in 1626, *vecino y primero fundador*, and his wife, Catalina de Villanueva, close to age 50 in 1626, *vecinos fundadores*.

5. Capitán Francisco Madrid, born circa 1593, *vecino antiguo*. His wife was María de la Vega Márquez, age 35 in 1631. It is unclear if this couple was married by the time Santa Fe was founded.

6. Capitán Hernán Martín Serrano, the elder, over age 70 in 1626, *antiguo poblador y vecino*. The mother of his son and namesake was Doña Inés, a Tano Indian who was acculturated into Spanish society and a longtime resident of Santa Fe.

7. Capitán Juan Rodríguez Bellido, age 70 in 1626, *primero fundador* and *vecino*, also referred to as one of the *antiguos pobladores*. His wife may have been a woman named Isabel (no surname), who was likely an acculturated Indian and referred to in 1607 as "*ysavel muger de fulano rodrígues*" (Isabel, the wife of so-and-so Rodríguez).

8. Capitán Alonso Varela, age 60 in 1626, *primero fundador*, married to Catalina Pérez de Bustillo.

9. Fray Cristóbal de Quirós, who came in the company of Pedro de Peralta and was remembered as "*de los Primeros que fundaron esta iglesia*" (among the first [friars] who founded this church).

10. Pedro de Peralta, governor of New Mexico from 1609 to 1614.

There is perhaps another probable founder, but documentary evidence is sparse:

11. Blas de Valencia. Francisco de Valencia declared he was a native of the Villa de Santa Fe and gave his age as 54 in 1661 and again as 54 in 1665, indicating he was born circa 1607–1611. In all likelihood he was a son of Blas de Valencia, one of the soldiers who came to New Mexico with Oñate in 1598. Blas de Valencia was a resident of the Villa de San Gabriel in 1604, and as late as 1613 he formed part of the soldier-escort of Gov. Bernardino de Ceballos from Mexico City to the Villa de Santa Fe.

Of the eight known founding families, the following surnames are still found in New Mexico today: Chávez, Gómez, Griego, Holguín, Madrid, Martínez (derived from Martín Serrano), Valencia and Varela. Not well accounted for as founders are the Franciscan friars who ministered to the settlers, the Mexican Indians who settled in the Barrio de San Miguel on the south side of the Santa Fe River and those Pueblo Indians who took part in the founding.

Over the course of the next eight to 10 issues of *La Herencia*, "Prientes" will spotlight the history and genealogy of the known founders of the Villa de Santa Fe. If additional research uncovers the names of other founders, these individuals and families will also be highlighted.

If you are a direct descendant of any of the founders, and if you or one of your grandparents carries the family name of one of the founders, consider sharing a family photo of grandparents, great-grandparents and possibly even great-great-grandparents. You can submit old photos with captions identifying the individuals to [herencia@herencia.com](mailto:herencia@herencia.com). The first family to be featured will be that of Martín Serrano.



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